Socialist Studies / Études socialistes 12 (1) Spring 2017

Article

THE TRANSFORMATION OF ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGES:UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DECOLONISING AND INDIGENOUS RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES[1]

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Abstract

There is conceptual confusion in academic scholarship regarding Indigenous research methodologies and decolonising research methodologies. Scholars view these paradigms as similar yet distinct, but very few seek to define that distinction. In this article, I explore the relationship between these approaches to academic research. Both paradigms emphasise the need to transform the academy because of its tendency to marginalise non-Western epistemologies. Transformation requires the interconnection and co-ordination of many paradigms including Indigenous, feminist, and antiracist approaches to research. I propose viewing Indigenous and decolonising research methodologies as a relationship, and suggest both are dynamic practices that do not exist outside of the people who use them. What they look like and how they relate to one another will depend upon who uses them, why they are used, and where they are practiced.

Keywords

Methodologies; decolonisation; place-based research; critical university studies; sociology of knowledge

There is conceptual confusion in academic literature regarding the distinction between Indigenous research methodologies and decolonising research methodologies. At the very least, the distinction between decolonising and Indigenous research is undefined. A chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research* on 'Decolonizing Research Practice: Indigenous Methodologies, Aboriginal Methods, and Knowledge/Knowing' (Evans et al. 2014) appears to tackle this question. The authors argue that Indigenous methodologies are an important pathway towards decolonisation,

[1] Acknowledgements: I extend thanks to Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, Dwayne Donald, and Ken Caine for their guidance with writing this article and approaching the subject matter in a respectful way. Any errors are my own.

although Indigenous research exceeds decolonising research in that it contains a 'revitalizing' impulse (Evans et al. 2014, 3). While acknowledging that decolonising and Indigenous research are 'closely related topics,' the authors focus primarily on Indigenous methodologies and do not explore decolonisation in a substantial way (Evans et al. 2014, 1). George Sefa Dei (2013, 29) situates Indigenous research under the umbrella of decolonisation, which he views as a 'broader, transformative project.' For him, Indigenous research is therefore one element in a much larger program to decolonise all facets of life. Aman Sium, Chandni Desai, and Eric Ritskes (2012) share this perspective and suggest that decolonisation is a multidimensional project consisting of many diverse goals and possible pathways, but they also insist that Indigenous knowledges are central to this project because of their place-based awareness (Sium et al. 2012, ii). Sium et al. (2012, ii) ultimately confront the same dilemma as me: that Indigenous knowledges are diverse and 'decolonization is a messy, dynamic, and a contradictory process.' Margaret Kovach (2009) highlights one of its messiest contradictions. She suggests that Indigenous methodologies are rooted in 'tribal' epistemologies while decolonising methodologies derive from Western critical theory (Kovach 2009, 80). If this is so, then Indigenous and decolonising methodologies are radically different from one another and may at times be epistemologically incompatible.

The distinction between Indigenous and decolonising methodologies has significant implications for the way one conducts research because methodologies, as distinct from methods, constitute a paradigm or worldview. Whereas 'method' refers to a particular mode of data collection and analysis, 'methodology' refers to a broader set of assumptions about the nature of reality, what constitutes knowledge, and how knowledge is acquired. Methodology is the framework that sets the parameters of research and guides the entire research process: it determines the purpose of research, the research question, and one's approach to it (Kovach 2009, 122; Tuck and McKenzie 2015, 76; Smith 2012, 144). Some researchers refer to Indigenous methodologies in the plural to distinguish between Indigenous and Western frameworks (Kovach 2009, 20-21), although I do so primarily to emphasise the diversity of Indigenous and decolonising methodologies (Absolon 2011, 118-120).

This article attempts to understand the distinction between Indigenous research methodologies and decolonising research methodologies. It draws on the academic literature and seeks to weave together disparate and contradictory ideas about research into a coherent narrative. I use Indigenous and decolonising approaches to research to illuminate one another, and consider that each methodological approach is in some way a reflection of the other and thus contains the other within itself. I begin by addressing how Indigenous perspectives of place help to understand knowledge production within the university. Dominant forms of knowledge produced in the academy reproduce Eurocentric and colonial orders while marginalising non-Western epistemologies. If non-Western researchers are to conduct non-Western research within the academy, there is

need for radical transformation of this institution. Decolonising the academy will require a concerted effort from Indigenous, feminist, antiracist, and other researchers, for each one has a unique perspective of colonialism. Indigenous methodologies offer particular insight because they help researchers view colonialism as a complex, multidimensional, and interrelated system, and they therefore emphasise the need for decolonising practices to be equally layered. A relational approach helps to understand not just the colonial mesh, but also the interaction between decolonising and Indigenous methodologies themselves. By viewing Indigenous and decolonising research as a relationship, I suggest that both are dynamic practices that do not exist outside of the people who use them. What these methodologies look like and how they relate to one another will ultimately depend upon who uses them, why they are used, and where they are practiced.

It is therefore important to address my own position as a researcher. I am a settler Canadian who grew up in rural Ontario and currently lives on Treaty 6 land in Edmonton, Alberta. On my father's side, I descend primarily from Scottish ancestors who settled along the St. Lawrence seaway several generations ago. On my mother's side, I descend from Polish Jewry who came to Canada as refugees after the Second World War. I do research in the field of genocide studies, and my personal history shapes my relationship to genocide in multiple ways: as a settler, I am in some ways implicated in the ongoing genocide of Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island; both maternal grandparents are Holocaust survivors, and my grandmother has always encouraged my study of the Holocaust; furthermore, the Holocaust is sometimes used to justify ongoing settler colonial (and arguably genocidal) practices in Israel/Palestine. I want to conduct research that challenges settler colonialism – or at the very least does not reproduce it – but also need to avoid appropriating Indigenous ideas and practices. To do this, it is necessary to distinguish between Indigenous and decolonising approaches to research, explore my relationship to each, and consider how I might appropriately use these methodologies to resist genocide and colonialism.

Place, knowledge, and the university

A basic principle of Indigenous epistemologies and research methodologies is that knowledge exists within a set of relationships rooted in place or land.[2] Indigenous understandings of place differ radically from dominant Western, in particular settler colonial, conceptions which view place as a geographically bounded and unchanging

[2] The relationship between place and knowledge is not exclusive to Indigenous research. Positivist and universalist Western scientific practices deny that knowledge is situated in place and insist that research extracts universal truths that can be applied to other contexts. However, Western science's denial of this relationship does not actually erase it. Like Indigenous knowledge, positivist Western knowledge is also situated in place. As I suggest in this paper, what is useful about Indigenous methodologies is that they acknowledge this relationship.

physical landscape (Tuck and McKenzie 2015, 59-67). According to Eve Tuck and Marcia McKenzie (2015, 31-43), place is rather constituted by a network of lived relationships between land, human persons, and other-than-human persons such as animals, plants, and climate. Its relational nature means that place is uneven, undergoing continual change, does not distinguish between insiders and outsiders, and is inextricably grounded in material, emotional, and spiritual reality (Tuck and McKenzie 2015, 29-46). All people exist within these relational networks and what one knows is produced in the encounter between person and place. To demonstrate the interdependence of knowledge and place, Herman Michell (2009) uses the practice of gathering berries as a metaphor for research. Like those gathering berries, researchers must go on a journey in search of something they need. Before gathering berries they must learn from elders where and when berries can be found, and then listen and respond to the land as they journey to and collect those berries. Within an Indigenous conception of place, however, it seems that place-based metaphors are not really metaphors at all. Knowledge literally does depend upon one's relationship to the land and is exercised through encounters with the land, and berries are no less substantive (or useful) than statistics or discourse.

It is difficult to distinguish between place and land because both constitute – and are constituted by – a network of human and other-than-human relationships. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) suggest that the distinction is largely conceptual. Place is anthropocentric in that it emphasises the human component of these relationships while land is topocentric and views humans as peripheral. From an Indigenous perspective, 'land' may therefore be preferable to 'place' (Tuck and McKenzie 2015, 54-57). Still, the horizons of place and person are blurry. Joe Sheridan and Roronhiakewen Dan Longboat (2006) demonstrate that land and mind are inseparable. On one hand, an individual's psychology and identity originate in a way of life determined by their relationship to the land; on the other hand, one's mind reproduces the myths that transform place into Creation. In other words, land creates people while people sustain Creation, and 'where one *is* has everything to do with *who one is*' (Sheridan and Longboat 2006, 369). Land is always present but always changing, humans (and non-humans) exist in a dynamic relation with it, and what one knows emerges from these perpetually shifting networks. In regards to colonialism, settler societies use colonial violence to impose buildings and other structures on the land, and this imposition shapes the settler's knowledge and relationship to land. But from an Indigenous perspective the land will always remain beyond these structures and, when the settler stops imposing them, the land will always emerge to reconstitute and reclaim its relationships.

The academy is itself a place that produces knowledge based on relationships. In a conversation with Coyote about graduate research, Raven asks whether 'normalised knowledges and practices have an origin or did they just pop out of the ether fully writ?' (Cole and O'Riley 2010, 324). Coyote answers by suggesting that knowledges, like words, contain etymologies that 'do not evolve themselves outside of human power relations and

connotations' (Cole and O'Riley 2010, 324). These power relations are obvious to university researchers observing the dynamics among faculties and disciplines, or within the hierarchies of studentship and professorship. Academic actors compete for funding from state and other corporate institutions, and those who produce knowledge that most privileges these institutions are most likely to receive funding (Cole 2004, 13-14). In Tuck and McKenzie's (2015) description of place as an uneven network of power relations, the academy is certainly place. But even more concretely, they observe that 'research is always situated physically...[and] is always undertaken by researchers and participants embedded in *places*' (Tuck and McKenzie 2015, 1).

Academic research has historically privileged Western epistemologies, value systems, and institutions while marginalising Indigenous ones. Margaret Kovach (2009, 29) explains how academics 'have become formidable gatekeepers of [knowledge systems] by objectifying knowledge into criterion-defined models, paradigms, and "truth"' as a means to regulate 'legitimate knowledge.' That is, the academy determines 'what does and does not count as knowledge' (Kovach 2009, 29). The modern academy has evolved within a Cartesian intellectual tradition that views the mind and body as separate and privileges the former (Tuck and McKenzie 2015, 53-54, 151-152). Mind/body dualism posits that researchers can (and should) achieve intellectual neutrality through the objective measurement of physical reality, and favours knowledge produced through logic, abstract reason, and measurement (Harvey 2003, 125-126). Academic research therefore privileges those values and institutions that emerged from Enlightenment thinking such as individualism, private property, and capitalism (see Smith 2012, 61-62). This means that the academy actively marginalises ways of knowing that are non-objective and non-dualist, such as embodied or emplaced forms of knowledge. Specifically, it requires the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledges that view land, body, mind, and spirit as interconnected. The result is to force Indigenous researchers to 'the borders of the vast and expanding territory that is the margin, that exists "outside" the security zone, outside the gated and fortified community' (Smith 2012, 199). To consider this metaphor in a somewhat more literal sense, the academy becomes a geometrical plane[3] with European epistemology positioned at the centre, Indigenous knowledges in the margins, and with the flow of power moving from the centre outwards.

In other words, positivist scientific research is the dominant intellectual tradition in the university, and other practices may exist but remain in the periphery. The modern academy emerged from a tradition of Western science that is positivist and universalist, and this remains a dominant form of knowledge production in the university. In recent decades, other perspectives have emerged from the Western tradition that do not reproduce positivist or universalist assumptions, such as some feminist or antiracist paradigms. Some scholars also conceive of decolonising research as a Western paradigm

[3] And here I intentionally invoke the idea of a Cartesian plane.

(Kovach 2009, 80). I discuss some non-positivist Western methodologies in the following sections and consider their usefulness within (or as) a decolonising paradigm.

Scholars argue that research ethics boards are extensions of academic institutions that function to reproduce Eurocentrism. University ethics boards promote a form of ethical practice that is unethical from an Indigenous perspective (Chilisa and Ntseane 2010; Cole 2004; Kovach 2009, 141-155; Weber-Pillwax 2004; Wilson and Restoule 2010). Ethics boards often rely on positivist approaches to ethics which privilege neutrality and seek to maintain distance between the researcher and researched. In contrast, Indigenous approaches to ethics emphasise that the researcher is accountable and must give back to the community involved with their research (Weber-Pillwax 2004, 79-81). Whereas Western ethics boards ask the researcher to be uninterested and uninvolved, Indigenous ethics require one who is deeply interested and involved. Applying positivist Western ethics within an Indigenous context can be harmful to the community (Kovach 2009, 141-155). Cole explains that the role of university ethics boards is to ensure that Indigenous peoples remain marginalised:

> what coyote's trying to say says raven is that ethics reviews
> are about ethics review boards
> full stop end of conversation they are not about being ethical
> universities and funding councils and the government which fund them
> have too much invested in appropriating or silencing nonwestern voices
> especially first nations' voices (Cole 2004, 7).

For Cole, ethics boards promote positivism and Eurocentrism in academic research rather than ethical research practices.

Decolonising research methodologies challenge Eurocentrism by de-centring Western epistemologies and re-centring marginalised ones. If the problem with the academy is that it is Eurocentric, then decolonisation can be achieved by enabling non-Western peoples to step into its centre. This is the solution that Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) proposes. Academic space[4] has been historically colonised by white men, although feminist, Indigenous, and other critical theorists are creating space for formerly marginalised peoples to step inside (Smith 2012, 165-169). Instead of privileging Western interests and practices, decolonising methodologies enable Indigenous researchers, for example, to 'privilege indigenous concerns, indigenous practices and indigenous participation as researchers and researched' (Smith 2012, 111). She does not challenge the basic framework of the academy, such as 'privilege' or the researcher/researched binary, and suggests that a re-orientation is sufficient. Nado Aveling (2013) argues that

[4] When referring to 'space,' I mean 'place' in the aforementioned sense. I use 'space' only when it is the specific language of the cited author.

researchers should not 'talk about what they don't know,' and she considers the role of an ally in decolonising research. She says that 'the positionality of an ally is invariably tenuous and often accompanied by discomfort. It is a discomfort that is grounded in not being an expert and not being centre stage' (Aveling 2013, 209). An ally is someone who steps to the side to make room for multiple voices, or even steps entirely aside if necessary. To decolonise research, positivist Western researchers must relinquish their monopoly on the academy – whether voluntarily or through force – so that marginalised voices can place their own needs and knowledge at the centre of research. While a re-centring approach does not require a significant transformation of the academy, it does mean that research is no longer guided by Western interests and suggests the potential for more radical change.

Within this framework, Indigenous methodologies are just one of many possible approaches to decolonising research. On the surface, Indigenous methodologies may appear to do little more than fill a void left by Western epistemologies pushed from the centre. This ostensibly appears to be what Dei suggests when he says:

> Indigenous research works with the 'epistemic saliency' (i.e., acknowledging the relevance, authenticity and primacy of local claims of knowing) of marginalized voices in accounting for their own experiences of oppression and colonization...it rests on the important recognition of the centrality of such voice in a researcher coming to know and understand the lived experiences of the researched. Indigenous research foregrounds such voice, as well as the personal, experiential and a political subject in search for social change (Dei 2013, 34).

This agenda is not unique to Indigenous research for it can be said of other antiracist and anticolonialist approaches (Dei 2013, 29). Yet Dei also suggests that 'Indigenous research is just one aspect of a much broader, transformative project of Indigenous resistance (and decolonization) in all spheres of life' (Dei 2013, 29). Indigenous research is indeed one of many forces that can de- and re-centre the academic field, but that process ultimately opens the possibility for more significant transformations. Cora Weber-Pillwax (1999) argues that Indigenous peoples, meaning both researchers and communities, will be the 'active-centre' that shapes the values and intentions of Indigenous research methodologies. She also declares that this new approach 'must inevitably lead to the dismantling of research structures based on western notions of scientific and intellectual hegemony' (Weber-Pillwax 1999, 39). Indigenous methodologies are one of many forces that can aid in the decolonisation of the academy, and are also one of many practices that can flourish through decolonisation. But the de- and re-centring of the academy is only one step in a much larger decolonising project.

Feminist and Indigenous methodologies are similar in that researchers can use both for the purpose of decolonising research. Decolonisation of the academy is a broad project that generally entails the perpetual de- and re-centring of academic place, with this process opening up the possibility for more significant transformations. Anyone can work towards wresting Western epistemologies from their position of privilege, and in the wake of this coup anyone should be able to conduct research in which their own values and practices are central. That is, decolonising methodologies enable and require a refocusing on marginalised voices. Women and Indigenous peoples face similar struggles in the university and throughout society as marginalised peoples, so may have something to learn from one another (Million 2009). Indigenous women and girls are particularly susceptible to oppression, but this means they may be particularly effective at developing anticolonial and transformative approaches to research (Arvin et al. 2013; Chilisa and Ntseane 2010; Million 2009). Aveling's (2013, 204-205) argument that researchers should not 'talk about what they don't know' resonates with feminist themes of felt experience, and she acknowledges that her own approach to Indigenous research is embedded in her feminist roots. Lester-Irabinna Rigney (1999) explicitly points out that feminist research can be used as a model for developing an Indigenous research methodology. He argues that 'Indigenist' methodologies must be a form of 'liberation epistemology' – which is roughly synonymous with what I refer to as decolonising methodologies – and develops a framework based on this premise. Rigney views feminism, along with antiracism, as one of the first liberation epistemologies to take root in the academy, and notes how it resisted academic objectivity by showing that knowledge is entwined with power relations. The feminist concern with lived experience is particularly useful to Indigenous researchers because it is in experience where one determines whether practices are oppressive or liberatory (Rigney 1999, 114-115). For Rigney, feminism in the university is a sort of intellectual predecessor to Indigenous research methodologies.

Transforming the academy

Decolonising researchers do not intend simply to replace Western epistemologies with marginalised ones, for the very distinction between centre and margin is itself problematic. A key feature of both colonialism and the Western academy is an emphasis on oppositional binaries: between centre and margin, researcher and researched, subject and object, victim and perpetrator. Frantz Fanon (1963, 38) argues that the essential structure of colonialism is binary, describing colonised places as 'a world cut in two... The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed.' The colonial system uses violence to maintain inequalities between coloniser and colonised, but also produces a colonised subject who views this opposition, as well as its own oppression, as natural (Fanon 1963, 35-106). Within the

academy, binarism is embedded in the concept of the 'other.' For Cole and O'Riley (2010), 'the other/ed' is constructed in contradistinction to the dominant culture and always represented as being less than, never equal to, mainstream society. This binary between normal and other, along with the structural inequalities within, results in the erasure of the latter: academic researchers erase the voice of the other, the colonised, or the object of research (Cole and O'Riley 2010, 331). A primary goal of decolonising research methodologies is to deconstruct binaries in academic thought and practice (Blix 2015; Harvey 2003; Kaomoea 2013; Kovach 2009, 156-173). For example, Julie Kaomea (2013) argues that scholars can decolonise educational research by discarding the 'researcher as scientist' paradigm and replacing it with a 'researcher as detective' paradigm. Conceptualising research as a 'private investigation' requires the researcher to consider the larger context of an 'educational crime.' Instead of addressing who was wronged and who wronged them, an investigative approach challenges victim/perpetrator binaries by showing that many people are implicated in many ways in these 'educational crimes' (Kaomea 2013). By focusing on the symptoms of colonialism, such as inequalities between victims and perpetrators, researchers may actually reinscribe these inequalities. Decolonising research methodologies address colonialism itself as a complex social system that produces both these categories and the inequalities inherent to them.

The aim of decolonising research methodologies is radical transformation of the academy. It is not enough simply to replace one epistemological order with another, nor to extract and integrate elements of Indigenous knowledge into the university, nor to allow Indigenous researchers to work amongst positivist Western-trained ones. Decolonising methodologies seek to transform the foundation upon which the academy operates – binarism, neutrality, and the concepts of ownership, objectivity, and knowledge. According to Fanon (1963, 246), decolonisation entails 'not only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonized man.' If decolonisation in general is 'the veritable creation of a new man' (Fanon 1963, 36) then decolonising methodologies are the veritable creation of a new research/er. But what this research/er will look like is still undefined, and the path to get there is neither certain nor singular. In the words of Sium et al. (2012), decolonisation is a 'tangible unknown.' It is a multidimensional process that requires many different people with many different practices working together to transform power dynamics. Indigenous research subsequently may or may not be part of this project, depending on the intentions of the researcher. If research is the search for and transmission of knowledge, as Dei (2013, 28-29) suggests, then Indigenous research can and will happen regardless of colonial, pre- or post-colonial, or any other context. Many researchers express how Indigenous methodologies can be used to transform the academy in radical ways (Chilisa and Ntseane 2010; Million 2009; Million 2011; Pio et al. 2014; Rigney 1999), though others are less overtly revolutionary and instead present Indigenous methodologies as one more

way(s) to understand the world (Debassige 2010; Michell 2009; Michell 2012; Wilson and Restoule 2010).

Decolonisation requires not just the transformation of intellectual thought, but a radical reconceptualisation of the place where research occurs. An academic environment that accommodates Indigenous research in a non-oppressive way will necessarily reflect this in its physical design, for land and place is the source of Indigenous knowledge. Red Crow Community College, located on the Kainai reserve in southern Alberta, is a diploma and degree granting college that teaches traditional Indigenous knowledge. Particularly notable about place is that its main building was the former St. Mary's Residential School.[5] Transformation of this building from an assimilationist instrument of the state into a First Nations run college reflects a radical reclamation of Indigenous knowledge, experience, and place. Not every class is taught in the building, however, and courses in Kainai Studies may be taught out-of-doors and in relation to the land (Mandel et al. 2015). Herman Michell (2012) demonstrates other ways that place can reflect Indigenous epistemologies. He presents the migawap, a traditional dwelling of the Woodlands Cree, as a conceptual framework through which to teach Cree 'science.' Michell (2012) describes how its foundation, covering, fire, binding, and each of its thirteen poles represent a component of traditional Cree knowledge or values. Although a teacher may articulate each element separately, it is only through their relationships to one another that the migawap can stand. It is critical that researchers work towards decolonising both the type of knowledge they produce as well as the concrete places in which they conduct research.

It is necessary to confront research at multiple sites because colonialism is a complex system comprising many interrelated domains. Colonialism is more than the European governance of non-European peoples and territories. For colonialism to take root, people must adopt a particular set of assumptions about who qualifies as a person, what society should look like, and what constitutes place. This means that colonialism penetrates nearly every facet of reality. One particular point of intersection is between colonialism and patriarchy (Arvin et al. 2013; Chilisa and Ntseane 2010; Million 2009). Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill (2013) demonstrate some of the ways that settler colonialism is a highly gendered process. The nation-state relies upon the nuclear family with its particular construction of sexuality and gender, and a settler state must therefore reproduce this social order. To establish a new state, a settler society will impose particular conceptions of family and gender while simultaneously erasing opposing models, such as traditional Indigenous social structures based on kinship. In other words, settler colonialism requires the imposition of heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism – social systems that reproduce hierarchy, white-male superiority, and sexualised violence

[5] The building was lost due to fire in 2015. Some survivors of St. Mary's see its destruction as a healing experience, although the loss of college resources is understandably devastating (Saskiw, 2015).

(Arvin et al. 2013, 14-17). But gender and sexuality are only two dimensions. Linda Smith (2012) points to a half dozen more sites where colonialism intersects: capitalism, models of race and humanity, the relationship between individuals and communities, conceptions of space and time, historical writing, and scientific rationalism (see chapters 1-4). Each of these sites functions to produce colonial knowledges and social systems, and any effective challenge to colonialism must be a concerted effort against them all.

Thus, decolonising methodologies are multidimensional practices that resist the various sites at which colonialism operates. This helps to understand why both Indigenous and feminist practices can be used as decolonising methodologies. Each challenges a different facet of colonialism: Indigenous researchers resist the way colonialism transforms land while feminist researchers combat sexual violence. Arvin et al. (2013, 14) argue that 'there cannot be feminist thought and theory without Native feminist theory' because patriarchy and colonialism are mutually reinforcing. Similarly, Dian Million (2009, 55) observes that 'To "decolonize" means to understand as fully as possible the forms colonialism takes in our own times,' which she does by exploring the intersection of race, sex, and gender and their mutual implication in colonialism. To decolonise means to simultaneously resist colonialism, patriarchy, race, as well as other oppressive structures such as capitalism and positivist science. Indigenous research methodologies are an absolutely essential part of this process, although they cannot accomplish it alone. Decolonising methodologies are like Michell's (2012) metaphorical migawap: Indigenous research is one pole, feminism is another, antiracism another, and so on. Each may appear separate, but it is not until every element comes together in its proper relation that decolonising methodologies can stand and provide shelter for us.

Research in relational terms

Relationality is a particularly useful lens with which to consider colonialism and decolonisation. Shawn Wilson (2008, 7) argues that it is a defining feature of Indigenous life. He explains that

> Identity for Indigenous peoples is grounded in their relationships with the land, with their ancestors who have returned to the land and with future generations who will come into being on the land. Rather than viewing ourselves as being *in* relationship with other people or things, we *are* the relationships that we hold and are part of (Wilson 2008, 80).

This perspective reflects the way that all things are interconnected – people, land, cosmos – and that one is responsible to those relationships, and one's location within place and social reality defines their responsibilities. Indigenous research methodologies must

support reality by treating knowledge, being, and ethics as interconnected (Wilson 2008, 69-71). Relationality is an underlying theme in the academic literature on Indigenous and decolonising research, and researchers acknowledge it in many ways: the way knowledge emerges from place; the interwoven threads between decolonising, Indigenous, feminist, and antiracist research; that colonialism is inseparable from patriarchy, race, capitalism, and Western science. Indigenous knowledge is particularly useful to the decolonising project because of its attention to the relationships that compose reality: it enables one to see and understand the ways in which the university, knowledge production, and oppression are bound up with one another. And these perspectives show us that decolonisation must be a concerted effort amongst everyone working together to transform not just the academy, but also the economy and business, family and gender, the nation-state, and more.

Relationality can be useful to non-Indigenous researchers engaging in decolonising research. Non-Indigenous academics, such as myself, may question whether it is appropriate to use a principle so deeply embedded in Indigenous perspectives. However, relations exist whether or not one acknowledges them, and Western researchers are particularly bad at acknowledge and respecting them. A first step for non-Indigenous researchers is simply to acknowledge the networks we are woven into. By understanding the extent and limits of these relations, researchers will understand the need to relinquish control over those domains to which they are not related. That is, researchers must stop doing research on 'the other' (Cole and O'Riley 2010). In particular, this means respecting the self-determination of Indigenous peoples:

> let *aboriginal* scholars and community members have control of evaluating
> all *aboriginal* sshrc funding from aboriginal and nonaboriginal applicants
> through an aboriginal designed and controlled *national aboriginal council*
> let us be strong too in holding aboriginal scholars to the red path
> to doing things in a good way honouring our ancestors our elders our
> children our women our men our methodologies epistemologies protocols
> practices let us be accountable to our communities and let us demonstrate
> that accountability (Cole 2004, 27).

Beyond this, academics can conduct research that highlights relationships instead of differences or categories. Dwayne Donald (2012) develops a decolonising approach, Indigenous Métissage, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. In this methodology, the researcher uses artifacts to examine cultural encounters in colonial contexts, recognising Aboriginal and Western cultures as distinct yet interconnected. The role of the researcher is to unravel and then re-braid these relations (Donald 2012). In general, a relational turn in research may appear as a refocusing on the uses of knowledge. For the decolonising researcher, this means addressing how knowledge is

used to reproduce colonial order and the way one can use knowledge to challenge this order.

Colonialism is a force that severs, or attempts to sever, the interwoven webs that compose reality. It transforms us into individuals disconnected from any larger community, and demands that we carry around knowledge that has nothing to do with the land on which we walk. Only by severing the bonds between people, land, and knowledge can it transform us into labour, property, and resources. But Indigenous knowledges help us to see that these networks continue to exist, whether or not we choose to recognise them. Colonialism denies them, or transforms harmonious relations into oppressive ones, though they always remain to be reclaimed.

It may be useful to view decolonising and Indigenous research methodologies in relational terms. When I first set out to distinguish between decolonising and Indigenous research, my immediate impulse was to treat them as categories: How can I classify them into a typology? What qualities characterise each category? Are these separate categories, or subcategories? Linda Smith was the first to chasten me (though only because I read *Decolonizing Methodologies* first). She pointed out that the aim of dominant Western research to measure, classify, and compare (in other words, to objectify) is the basis of racism, and continues to be the process through which many people, Indigenous and otherwise, are oppressed (Smith 2012, 44-47). But beyond that, it became clear to me that the answer was not categorically black and white. Indigenous and decolonising methodologies seem to intersect at some points while diverging at others, weaving themselves into a complex braid. They are clearly not the same thing, but neither are they entirely separate. Rather, they appear to have a living relationship with one another. Before concluding, I want to consider briefly some forms that this relationship can take and try to observe some points of intersection and contradiction.

Indigenous research is both the stimulus behind and desired outcome of decolonising methodologies. Dominant Western academic practices actively marginalise Indigenous epistemologies by treating Indigenous peoples as the objects of research. Researchers in the university have begun to seek more respectful ways to conduct research with, rather than on, Indigenous communities (Smith 2012, 4-5). If researchers are to conduct respectful research, they must be able to do so in a way that reflects Indigenous forms of knowledge and ethics. Thus, the need to legitimise Indigenous knowledge within the university created a need to decolonise the academy, while the ability to conduct Indigenous research is the desired outcome of decolonisation. In this way, decolonising methodologies are a necessary but temporary step on the path to Indigenous research, sandwiched between the desire and ability to conduct Indigenous research. Kovach (2009, 85) is explicit that 'The purpose of decolonization is to create space in everyday life, research, academia, and society for an Indigenous perspective without it being neglected, shunted aside, mocked, or dismissed.' However, she also suggests that decolonising theory corresponds more to critical research than Indigenous,

thereby rooting it in the Western intellectual tradition (Kovach 2009, 80). This suggests that decolonising methodologies might ultimately be self-destructing. If decolonising methodologies effectively transform the academy into a non-Western institution, some Western paradigms may be discarded: [6] decolonisation theory may prove itself to be irrelevant.

Yet Indigenous research practices can themselves become a decolonising force, for their very presence within the academy is an act of resistance. Its marginalisation within the academy means that Indigenous research has the potential to challenge dominant practices, and Indigenous research can therefore be an empowering and liberatory practice, particularly for Indigenous peoples (Fredericks 2007, 15; Million 2009; Rigney 1999; Sheridan and Longboat 2006, 378-379). Though not intrinsically decolonising, when used in a certain way Indigenous research can have a decolonising effect. For example, Dian Million (2011) and Gladys Rowe (2014) consider the transformative power of dreaming. Dreaming is important for Indigenous knowledge systems because it functions to illuminate relationships between personal identity, community, and land. Through the process of dreaming, the dreamer conceptualises and understands the relationships between the many components of reality and develops a narrative based on these connections. In other words, dreaming is a mythic process that creates the world and transforms reality into Creation. Yet these relations and narratives are not fixed, so the dreamer must engage in the ongoing imagination and re-imagination of reality. In Million's (2011, 321-322) words, dreaming is an act of 'theorizing' through which one can 'reorganize boundaries' of reality. Colonial relations are not fixed and so it is possible to re-imagine them through dreaming – to redraw the structure of colonialism so that it is no longer colonial. The purpose of dreaming may not be to deconstruct the colonial order, although it can certainly be used to that effect.

On one hand, Indigenous and decolonising methodologies are intended specifically for Indigenous peoples. Robert Lovelace (2004) makes this suggestion through dialogue with Peter Cole's 'trick(ster)s of aboriginal research.' Cole (2004) is concerned with both Indigenous and decolonising research: his primary concern is the ability to conduct research in an Indigenous way, but recognises that decolonisation is necessary to achieve this. Lovelace's (2004) review of Cole's article enacts a conversation between several parties – Indigenous and non-Indigenous, academic and non-academic, Greek philosophers and cartoon characters – who inspect Cole's argument (represented as a rock, grandfather, or Platonic truth depending on one's position). Blondie, from the comic strip, desperately tries to understand what Cole's message is for her:

[6] I would argue that Western paradigms assume Western superiority. If one discards the idea of Western superiority, they rupture the very foundation of Western knowledge.

> Mìno. ...Peter Cole doesn't want you to do anything. It's not about you. He's not talking to you, but you're hearing what he has to say because you're listening in. You think he is talking to you because along with being eurocentric you're egocentric.
> Blondie. You don't have to hurt my feelings.
> Mìno. You're right. Then again, I could just leave you guessing.
> Blondie. It's so unfair! What does he want anyway? Who is he talking to?
> Kiwèkì. To us. *(Kiwèkì brushes back her hair from her forehead with two hands in one long motion)* He wants us to be brave so he is showing how the words that are used like poison to enslave us can be made into jokes. It is not meant to hurt you, it is meant to free us from letting those words control us (Lovelace 2004, 34).

Indigenous and decolonising research is intended as a liberatory tool for Indigenous peoples and has little to do with Westerners. The idea that Indigenous research has anything to do with white people is just a Eurocentric reinscription of Western superiority.

On the other hand, the development of Indigenous methodologies can be particularly useful for non-Indigenous researchers seeking to decolonise their research. In an early exploration of Indigenous research methodologies, Weber-Pillwax (1999) considers how researchers might begin to develop them and identifies some possible characteristics. She is certain that Indigenous research must be conducted by Indigenous peoples and from an Indigenous perspective, but the development of these methodologies specifically within the university is a different matter. She suggests that:

> If appropriate preparation of non-indigenous researchers for work with indigenous communities were the only result of an academic focus on indigenous research methodology, I believe that would be enough to justify the work... an academic focus on indigenous research methodology would move scholars toward a stronger sense of professional and ethical accountability (Weber-Pillwax 1999, 37-38).

Indigenous peoples do not need to outline their own unique research methodologies because, as Dei (2013) also notes, they always have and always will conduct Indigenous research. Indigenous research is marginalised in the academy, however, which results in unethical practices by university researchers. Training non-Indigenous researchers in Indigenous research can encourage accountability to various communities – including Indigenous and scholarly communities – and in this way Indigenous research may be an effective way to decolonise the non-Indigenous academe.

There may appear to be contradictions with the relationship between Indigenous and decolonising research methodologies. One might confusedly ask based on the preceding paragraphs: So decolonising methodologies are intended for Indigenous peoples while Indigenous methodologies are for non-Indigenous peoples? It would be easy to attribute this ostensible paradox to a conceptual ambiguity between these approaches: the two concepts are blurred because researchers do not define Indigenous and decolonising methodologies consistently. But there seems a better way to understand this. A crucial point for Weber-Pillwax (1999; 2004), which is also a major theme throughout the literature, is that research depends upon one's position. Methodologies will look radically different depending on whether the researcher is Indigenous, an Indigenous person in diaspora, non-Indigenous, from a marginalised group, a settler, and so on. Whether one conducts Indigenous or decolonising research depends upon who and where they are, what they study, and what are their intentions.

Relating Indigenous and decolonising research methodologies

Viewing Indigenous and decolonising research methodologies as a relationship illuminates their dynamic and contextual natures. It is difficult to say 'decolonising research is this' or 'Indigenous research is that' because relationships are perpetually in flux – these are approaches to research that breathe. They are practices that exist in action and will therefore depend on their position with the researcher: they will actualise differently based on their location in time and place, and the intentions of the researcher. They may be of use to certain people at certain moments, but not necessarily others.

Colonialism is a multidimensional process and decolonisation must respond to it as such. Colonisation has transformed the land, the way we produce knowledge, the ways we build families and operate businesses, and the very way we define humanity. We all perpetuate colonialism as people of gender, family status, race or normalised whiteness, consumers, and inhabitants of place. Everyone is enmeshed in the colonial fabric and we must all work to unravel it,[7] but we must all do so based on who we are and how we are twisted into its netting. Indigenous research is, without a doubt, crucial for decolonisation of the academy, though this alone is not enough. Others must respond as feminist or antiracist researchers, but only so long as they recognise their struggle is not confined by disciplinary boundaries. Disciplinarity suggests that the struggle is narrow, and this sense of boundedness may create a false sense of comfort. We all struggle against different aspects of colonialism from very different positions, so we cannot privilege one practice more than any other. Disciplinary boundaries must dissolve, though each distinct perspective should remain: we should feminise native studies, nativise feminist studies, genderfuck economics, racialise environmental studies, environmentalise film studies,

[7] I borrow this metaphor from Andrew Woolford (Woolford, 2014).

and so on. This will dissolve institutional hierarchies and help transform the academy into an institution that resists colonial order. Yet if such a transformation is effective there may ultimately be no such categories as Western research, Indigenous research, or decolonising research. This is not to say that all research should be the same. Academic disciplines should not be boundaries that separate us, but should rather be the basis for building relationships between people from different positions and perspectives.

The same transformation must be applied to the boundaries of academia itself because, just as each person is entwined in the mesh of colonialism, so too is each institution. It is crucial that researchers work towards decolonising the academy, but must remain aware that this is only a small part of the larger battle. Decolonisation of the academy is only possible insofar as we also decolonise the land, the city, the stock exchange, the state. If such a project is successful, these institutions may be so radically transformed as to be unrecognisable. As a university researcher, this is the approach I take. Colonisation tears things apart and has fragmented the world into discrete little pieces, and it is now a collective effort to put it back together.

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